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SIPDIS

NSC FOR ABRAMS AND LOGERFO

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR IS KPAL GOI INTERNAL

SUBJECT: CONVERGENCE COHORT: INFLUENTIAL ADVISERS ON OLMERT'S TEAM

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Gene A. Cretz. Reason 1.4 (B/D)

11. (C) Summary: In a bid to make his office more "presidential," Prime Minister Olmert has decided to name Dr. Yoram Turbowicz as his chief of staff, a new position that will reportedly make the Office of the Prime Minister (PMO) more effective in terms of policy coordination. The incoming chairman of the National Security Council (NSC), Ilan Mizrahi, will now be co-located in the PMO and will report to the Prime Minister through Chief of Staff Turbowicz (septel). Olmert's Alternate Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, has also appointed a new director-general, Aharon Abramowitz, who is reportedly an influential member of the convergence policy planning team. End Summary.

MFA

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12. (C) Olmert's Alternate Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, has energized her ministry with new operating procedures (e.g., more foreign policy brainstorming sessions with MFA experts) and less interference with diplomatic assignments (in the ministry and abroad). She intends to remain influential on national security priorities, including convergence policy, and has appointed a new director-general she trusts from her tenure as minister of justice. Her personal advisor, Dita Kohl, described Livni as "professional rather than political," a real contrast from her predecessor, Silvan Shalom. Livni has also reportedly tapped Elon Joanes, a former journalist with human rights experience who is currently completing an advanced degree at Princeton, as her chief of staff. He will have particular responsibility for "political work" and her schedule. MFA contacts indicate that the current, career chief of staff, Jacob Dayan, will remain on her team as well.

13. (C) Career MFA contacts report that Livni "loves lawyers," and Aharon Abramowitz will add to her experience his own as an architect of PM Sharon's 2004 Disengagement Plan who helped elaborate compensation packages for Gaza settlers. Abramowitz, as well as Deputy Attorney General Shavit Matias, are regarded by MFA contacts as lawyers whose institutional expertise will be tapped by Olmert's national security team to handle the "internal" issues associated with implementing convergence policy in the new government. Israeli journalist Aluf Benn told poloff that Abramowitz is close to the PM's Special Adviser, Dov Weissglas. Econoff contacts report that Livni trusts him as he was the force who explained settlement and housing policy when she became minister of justice. He is a seasoned technocrat who seeks consensus in decision-making and has been responsive to the USG on a number of far flung issues (settlements, IPR, financial laws).

PMO

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13. (SBU) New Advisors in the Office of the Prime Minister (PMO) include the following:

-- Chief of Staff Yoram Turbowicz, 48, has worked in the private sector, including at the Israeli Discount Bank from 1998-2001, and received his J.D. from Harvard Law School; he specialized in commercial law, antitrust law, securities, criminal law and arbitration. In government, he served in several senior executive positions such as the Israeli trade regulations commissioner and legal adviser of the Ministry of Industry and Trade (where Olmert served as minister). He is a former lecturer at Tel Aviv University and the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, and was once a candidate for attorney general. Turbowicz played the lead role in negotiating the Olmert government guidelines and the coalition agreements with Labor and other parties in the government.

-- Director General Ra'an Dinur is a close associate of Olmert and political ally from Olmert's time in the mayor's office. Dinur also served as director-general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Dinur will manage and supervise all of the activities of the government office in

the economic, social and civil fields, including the economic branch of the National Security Council. His predecessor's special tasks included (and will likely continue) coordination of the economic aspects of the Disengagement Plan.

-- Deputy Chief of Staff Oved Yehezkel will coordinate the work of other advisors in the Office of the Prime Minister. He has been the go-to man for coalition political discussions in the period following the formation of the government on May 4. Oved, an attorney, served as a counselor to Olmert during his tenure as mayor of Jerusalem during the 1990's.

-- Head of Bureau and Olmert's "eternal bureau chief" Shula Zaken, 49, -- is an office manager who has worked with Olmert since 1977 when she served as his secretary at the launch of the Ehud Olmert and Co. law firm. Olmert associates note that Shula made the transition from secretary to personal aide and advisor to Olmert during his years as mayor of Jerusalem. When Olmert was accused of using Likud Party money to fund the transatlantic travel of his wife and daughter in 1988, he told investigators that his assistant, Ms. Zaken, was responsible for the technical details of paying for trips, but they have remained loyal partners. Her acquaintances told the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot that "Olmert comes first with her and if he were to go and become a street cleaner, Shula would follow him."

¶4. (C) Several of former PM Sharon's key aides will remain in their current positions, including: Cabinet Secretary, Yisrael Maimon, who has served in this position since 2003; Special Adviser Dov Weissglas (who reportedly declined an offer to be National Security Advisor); Foreign Policy Adviser Shalom Tougerman; and General Military Secretary Gadi Shamni, who joined the PMO in 2005. MFA contacts report that Shamni remains very influential within the PMO. Shamni graduated from the U.S. Army's Special Warfare Qualification Course in Fort Bragg, NC, and the Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, PA. DAO reports that as a result of an injury sustained in battle, Shamni speaks quietly and in a very low voice. There are no indications thus far that the current roles played by Weissglas and Tougerman on Israeli-Palestinian affairs will change appreciably under the leadership of PM Olmert.

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